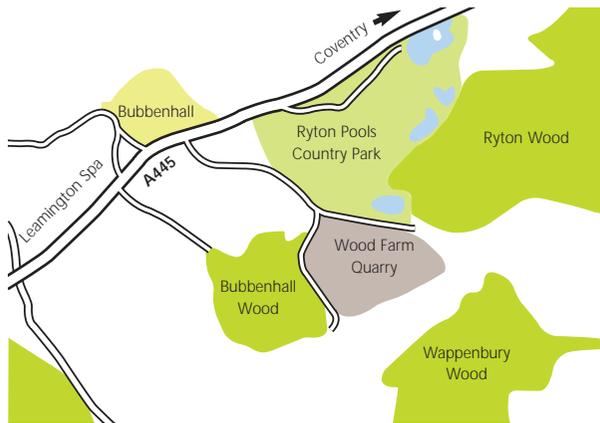


The Big Lake?

It is thought that during the glaciation, the ice sheets blocked the Bytham River to form a large glacial lake or lakes that some geologists have referred to as 'Lake Harrison'. Finely banded clays seen in local quarries might represent ancient lake-bottom mud.



Baggington sand



Baggington gravel

Our Work

Today the sands and gravels are extracted as a source of aggregate for the production of concrete and mortar used in the construction industry. With backing from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund through English Nature and support from the University of Warwick, Warwickshire Museum and Smith's Concrete, WGCG are running a project to interpret and conserve the sand, gravel and clay deposits found in eastern Warwickshire. An interpretation board has been installed at Ryton Pools Country Park, Bubbenhall and exposures of ancient river and glacial deposits have been protected at the country park and at Wood Farm Quarry. Look out for more information around local villages and at the Wildlife Trust's Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon.

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group is a non-profit making organisation interested in promoting and protecting local earth heritage within local communities. If you would like to obtain more information or become a member and get involved, please contact us:

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group

c/o Centre for Lifelong Learning
University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 7AL

Telephone 02476 52 35 33

www.wgcg.co.uk

www.woodfarmproject.org.uk

Warwickshire Geological
Conservation Group



The Ice Age Revealed



The Ice Age Revealed

Parts of eastern Warwickshire are underlain by deposits of sand, gravel and clay. These sediments help geologists and archaeologists to understand our ancient environment roughly half a million years ago. At that time, southern and eastern Warwickshire were occupied by a broad river valley. The river, known as the Bytham River was large and powerful.



The sands and gravels that it left along its floodplains are revealed today by quarrying. They locally contain fossil shells, ancient animals bones and even prehistoric stone tools which provide evidence of human habitation in what we now know as Warwickshire, hundreds of thousands of years ago. Plant pollen fossils indicate that the river flowed through pine woodland made up mostly of conifer-like trees with some grassy areas of open land in the surrounding area. Pine voles and other animals may have lived in the forest. The river was flowing at a time when horses, bison and even straight-tusked elephants roamed wild in the area.



5cm

Elephant tooth from the base of the Baginton Gravels at Wood Farm

Warwickshire's First People

The first people to colonise Britain probably belonged to an ancient human species known as Homo heidelbergensis: "Heidelberg Man". These people fashioned the earliest stone tools found in the midlands: teardrop shaped hand axes with two sharp cutting edges. These were made from volcanic rock, which probably came from the Lake District. A number of specimens have been discovered in local sand and gravel pits and can be viewed in the Warwickshire Museum. Several appear not to have been used and some archaeologists think that they were used for a type of ritual.



The Big Chill

Around 450,000 years ago Britain entered a severe glaciation as ice sheets moved down from the north to cover most of the midlands.



This ice age lasted for around 50,000 years. The ice advanced and retreated twice, picking up fragments of the rocks below it and depositing them in eastern Warwickshire as a stony clay deposit known as the Thrussington Till. This is now seen in local quarries above the sand and gravel deposits of the Bytham River.



Thrussington Till

The ice sheets led to extensive changes in the British landscape as much material was eroded away and deposited somewhere else. This erosion is associated with changes in drainage patterns that resulted in the demise of the Bytham River and the diversion of the River Thames onto its present course.